DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 350 778 EC 301 589

AUTHOR	Neufeld, G. Ronald; Stevens, Allen
TITLE	A Summary of Research on School Dropouts and Implications for Special Education. Stay in School Initiatives, Book 1.
INSTITUTION	Canadian Council for Exceptional Children, Kingston (Ontario).
PUB DATE	92
NOTE	33p.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Dropout Characteristics; *Dropout Prevention; Dropout Programs; *Dropout Research; *Dropouts; Foreign Countries; *High Risk Students; Intervention; Secondary Education; Special Education; Student Characteristics

ABSTRACT

This publication, the first in a series of three monographs on school dropout research, is designed to provide background information as a foundation for local programs planning throughout the Canadian provinces. Topics in this monograph include definitions of dropouts, characteristics of persons who drop out of school, factors that identify at-risk students, characteristics of programs or approaches that have met with some success in preventing at-risk students from leaving school before graduation, and implications for special education. Programs that offer possible remedies to the dropout problem are discussed under three broad categories: :"fix the child," "fix components of the system," and "restructure the system." (Contains 18 references.) (JDD)

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Stay in School Initiatives

Book 1:

A Summary of Research on School Dropouts and Implications for Special Education

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The Canadian Council for Exceptional Children
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Acknowledgments:

The Canadian Council for Exceptional Children wishes to acknowledge the contribution of the Minister of State for Youth, Employment and Immigration Canada.

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Preface

The Canadian Council for Exceptional Children (C.C.E.C.) is a major professional organization in Canada dedicated to improving the quality of education for exceptional children and youth. The mission of the C.C.E.C. is to assist educational leaders to establish new directions in program development and delivery. The C.C.E.C. seeks to develop a future in which:

1. All people are offered equal educational opportunities for growth.
2. Education is the right of every person. Society has the responsibility to extend this opportunity without condition. The C.C.E.C. believes that educating every learner with special needs necessitates an ongoing dialogue between those involved in regular and special education.

With this mission and vision for the future, the C.C.E.C. set out to contribute towards the Stay-In-School Initiative, particularly as there is a high incidence of early school leavers in the population of students with exceptionalities. The C.C.E.C. had two major objectives:

1. To identify the major issues related to maintaining exceptional children in school.
2. To identify future directions and the means to achieve these directions.

To address these objectives the C.C.E.C. organized two National Forums. The first Forum held in Hamilton in October, 1991 included representatives from key decision-makers in education from all the provinces and territories as well as representatives from several national groups. This Forum set the stage and provided the preparatory work for a subgroup of the first Forum to meet in Ottawa in February, 1992. This

subgroup developed an action plan which could be used at the local level in order to address the issues surrounding early school leavers. This action plan is in the form of three monographs.

The C.C.E.C. is pleased to provide these monographs for use by groups and individuals who are concerned about early school leavers. It is only through the development of partnerships and initiatives at the local community level that these issues will be satisfactorily addressed.

The C.C.E.C. wishes to acknowledge the support and involvement of Canada Employment and Immigration in the development of these documents and in the planning process leading to the Forums. This work would not have been possible without that support. Thanks is also extended to participants in both Forums and to the sponsoring organizations for making this work possible.

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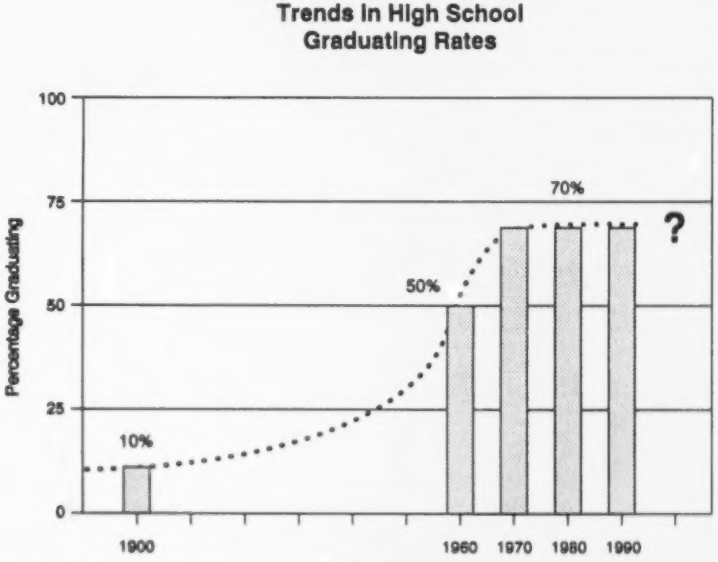
1 Introduction

In a rapidly changing socio-economic order that is characterized as knowledge-based, people who do not have at least a high school education are at a serious disadvantage. Research shows that without this credential, people often face unemployment, lost wages due to low-paying jobs, and "dead-end", unsatisfying jobs. Politicians and economists express concern that Canada is losing ground in a global economy and our sagging momentum at the international level is due to an inadequate reservoir of well-educated people who are flexible, independent, comfortable in a high technology context and who have critical thinking skills.

As the graph on page 2 indicates, beginning with the first decade of the 20th Century, high school graduation trends gradually increased from 10% to approximately 70% in 1970. At that point, our ability to increase the rate of high school completions has stalled.

Low self-esteem is a common psychological consequence of dropping out which in turn results in higher than normal rates of dependence on welfare, alcoholism, conflict with the law, imprisonment and even suicide. From a sociological perspective, high school graduation in our culture might be characterized as a rite of passage marking the successful moving of an individual from adolescence into adulthood. The negative consequences of dropping out are enormous, first and foremost, at a personal level, second,because it puts pressure on already overburdened social services, and finally, because it threatens our place in a global economy. There is widespread belief that many students who drop out of school are capable of graduating; if this is so, our educational institutions are failing them.

In response to the challenge of increasing graduation rates, the Canadian Council for Exceptional children, with support from



Employment and Immigration Canada, conducted two national forums with representatives from each Territory and Province and from every major constituency in the field of education. The purpose of the forums was to provide guidance for local organizations that wish to plan and develop stay-in-school programs. With local schools and communities that surround them in mind, three monographs have been developed. The first is a summary of research findings. The second contains information regarding school and community partnerships, and the third monograph presents a model plan with goals and objectives to illustrate major priorities and activities that a local community might undertake. Although information in the monographs have implications for district, Provincial and Federal participation, the central intent was to provide practical information for local organizations in keeping with a strong conviction at the forums that this should be a grassroots movement.

Topics in this first monograph include definitions of dropouts, characteristics of persons who drop out of school, factors that identify at-risk students, characteristics of programs or approaches that have met with some success in preventing at-risk students from leaving school before graduation, implications for special education and selected, annotated references. The intent of this material is to provide background information as a foundation for local planning.

2 Definition and Terminology

Terms that appear in "dropout" literature include *school leavers, early leavers, withdrawn, excluded* and *force-outs.*

- Definition has implications for determining the scope of the problem.
- There is no standard or uniform definition for dropouts in Canada making comparison between various settings difficult.
- A general definition commonly used by researchers identifies a dropout as "any person who has left secondary school for any reason prior to graduation" (Sullivan, 1988).
- More functional definitions are used in local settings.
- Hoffman (1990) offers the following definition:

A dropout is an individual who:

a) was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year;
b was not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year;
c) has not graduated from high school or completed a state- or district-approved education program, and;
d) does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:
—transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-approved education program;
—temporary absence due to suspension or school-approved illness, or
—death.

For the purposes of this definition:

a) a school year is the 12-month period of time beginning with the normal opening of school in the fall;
b) an individual has graduated from high school or completed an approved education program upon receipt of formal recognition from school authorities;
c) a state- or district-approved program may include special education programs, home-based instruction, and school sponsored GED preparation.

- Definition and terminology must avoid negative consequences of labelling often associated with definitions, terminology and tracking.

3 Scope of the Problem

The average Canadian dropout rate is 30%.

- Data indicate wide variations in dropouts across regions, within regions, and even within a school district.
- In Canada, there is evidence that students who live in smaller communities are more likely to drop out than students who live in large cities.
- A greater proportion of Native students drop out of school than do students from any other group.
- Although native and non-native students typically drop out of school at about the *same age*, in Canada, native students complete fewer grades (i.e., grade retention occurs more for Native than for non-native students) (MacKay and Myles, 1989).
- Most Canadian dropouts quit school when they are 16 or 17 years old.
- The percentage of dropouts in grades 10 and 11 accounts for 50 to 60% of all dropouts.
- The grade 9 dropout rate is 8 to 9% (King, Warren, Michalski, and Peart, 1988).
- Almost half (49%) of students who drop out re-enter at a later date (53% females vs. 44% males).
- Graduation rate of students who return is only 40% (Karp, 1988).

4 Dropouts: Who Are At Risk?

Early identification of students at risk of dropping out may enable us to introduce preventive measures to reduce the dropout rate.

The following list encompasses commonly reported factors.

At-Risk Characteristics

- Poor academic record (especially math and reading)
- Poor attendance record
- Grade retention
- Low education level of parents
- Dislike of school
- Students in general or basic-level courses
- Little or no participation in extra-curricular activities
- History of discipline problems
- Disrupted/chaotic families
- Poor self-concept
- Inadequate goals
- Low aspirations
- Low socio-economic family status
- Feeling that no one in school cared
- Pregnancy
- Working 15 hours or more per week
- Language difficulties

(Glickman, 1990; Wittenberg, 1988; Karp, 1988; Sullivan, 1988; Hahn, 1987).

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- Identification of "at-risk students" should be conducted in ways that avoid negative effects associated with labelling.
- If the dropout rate is 30%, the population at risk of dropping out may be 40%-50% of the total school population.
- In Ontario, the Ministry of Education reported 56% of Metis/off-reserve Native students to be at risk of dropping out of school (MacKay and Myles, 1989).
- Students retained for one year have only a 50% chance of graduation and this figure increases sharply when students are retained for two years or more.
- The order of importance of predictors or risk factors differs from one researcher to another.

CHARACTERISTICS OF DROPOUTS

- Understandably, there is substantial overlap between factors identifying students at risk of dropping out and actual characteristics of dropouts.
- Personal and family characteristics of dropouts may help to explain *why* some students drop out of school and others remain and contributes additional information that may help to identify students at risk (MacKay and Myles, 1989).
- It is clear that many factors (e.g., personal, family, economic, school-related, etc.) contribute to dropping out.
- Research directs considerable attention toward school-related factors and supports the notion that school is the place to initiate and coordinate prevention/intervention activities.
- Most researchers agree that dropping out is a long term process with many contributing factors usually starting in elementary school. Some researchers contend that students at risk of dropping out can often be identified by the third grade.
- Many of the characteristics listed below could be used as predictors of dropping out.

School-Related Factors

—Curriculum irrelevant - felt that studying curriculum was a waste of time.

—Hands-on learners -prefer *doing* to reading and studying.

—Frustrated learners - difficulty finding teachers who cared and were willing to help with academic problems.

—Education de-valued - tended to dislike school and attached less value to education than graduates.

—Poor attendance records

—Alienated - limited participation in school activities and felt neglected and de-valued by teachers and peers.

—Discipline problems - frequent detentions and suspensions.

—Enrolled in general or basic-level courses.

—Grade retention.

Personal Factors

—Short-range goal setters - needed immediate gratification. Inadequate goals compared to graduates.

—Work-driven - focus on financial rewards, and immediate feedback in workplace.

—Worked 15 hours or more per week.

—Concrete vs. abstract thinkers - tendency to focus on tangible items.

—Low self-esteem and self-confidence - dropouts often ashamed of school difficulties.

—Low aspirations.

—Language difficulties.

—Sex -dropout more likely to be boy (60%) than girl (40%). If girl, reason was often pregnancy.

Family-Related Factors

—Low socio-economic status - parents working in unskilled occupations with low incomes and/or on social assistance.

—Large families - dropouts tended to come from larger families than graduates.

—Parents with low education levels and who lack a sense of the value and importance of education.

—One-parent families - high divorce rate among parents of drop outs with no father at home.

—Chaotic and disorganized home background - family plagued by conflict and dissension.

(Levin, 1990; Sullivan, 1988; Karp, 1988; King, Warren, Michalski and Peart, 1988; Natriello, Alexander, and Pallas, 1989; Cairns, Cairns, and Neckerman, 1989).

5 Intervention Trends

The trend in suggested remedies to the dropout problem fall into three broad categories:

Fix the Child

—The child is the problem and does not fit into the system as it is.

—Identify students at risk of dropping out and provide treatment for individuals or force them out.

Fix Components of the System

—The system is principally responsible to the majority of the student population (i.e., the "normal" person who fits in).

—Identify students at risk and create alternative programs to rehabilitate them or move them through school on parallel tracks.

—This amounts to "tinkering" with parts of the system. For the most part, the established system is unchanged.

Restructure the System

—The scope of the dropout problem (40-50% of students are at risk) suggests that the system as a whole needs to be looked at with a mind to wholesale restructuring.

—Restructuring would benefit not only students at risk of dropping out but the entire school population.

- In keeping with recognition that reasons for dropping out and characteristics of dropouts are complex and multifaceted, so also with solutions, there are no single or simple answers.
- Many researchers are skeptical of the value of alternative programs.

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- The majority of research opposes tracking programs (i.e., basic/general vs. academic tracks).
- Some researchers contend that prevention/intervention programs are only short-term and short-sighted "bandaids" and there is limited evidence that they are generally effective (e.g., in spite of many attempts at intervention in recent years—overall dropout rates have not decreased).

Characteristics of Successful Programs

- Team approaches
- Administrative flexibility
- Community involvement
- Mentorships
- Counselling for at-risk students
- Broad range of in-school services (e.g., health care, family planning education, infant care facilities for adolescent mothers)
- Effective school/business collaboration (jobs in communities for students)
- Year-round schedules
- Flexible curriculum
- Accountability for dropout rates at all levels of public education
- Involvement of parents
- One to one tutoring
- Interdisciplinary instruction
- Teaching of thinking skills
- Individualized instruction (e.g., I.E.P.'s, individual contracts, self-driven curriculum)
- Flexible graduation criteria

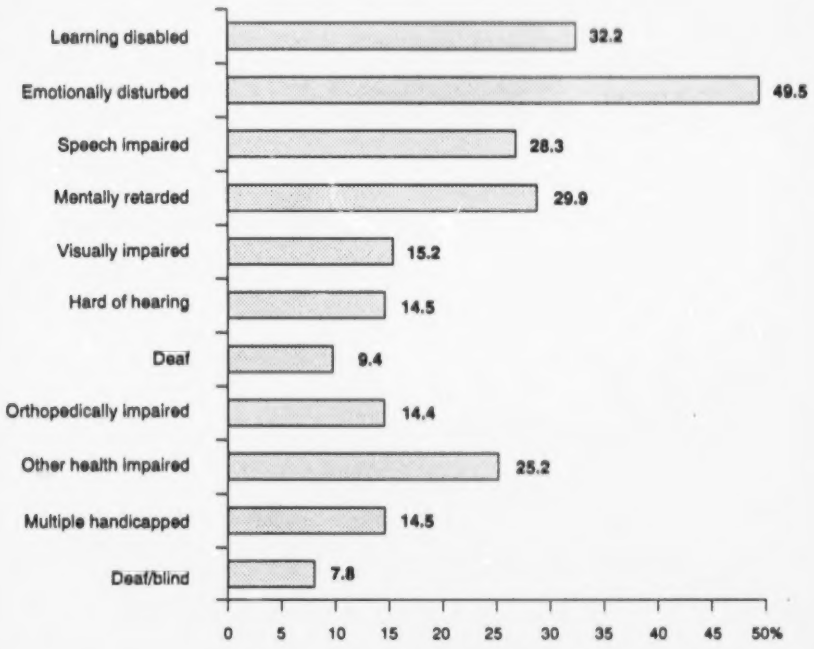
(Wittenberg, 1988; Hahn, 1987)

- Most research emphasizes that reduction of dropout rates cannot be accomplished by schools alone. They call for partnerships with business, involvement of social agencies and collaboration with parents. Schools should take the lead in cementing these needed alliances.
- Elements that may be incorporated into efforts at restructuring include recommendations from areas such as special education, school effects, school climate, effective schools, effective teaching, and cooperative education.
- Many curriculum approaches and teaching procedures that are promoted in special education are reflected in the characteristics of recommended dropout prevention/intervention approaches.
- Three major issues that surface in most of the literature on dropouts concern first, a sense of alienation on the part of dropouts who felt that no one cared about them; second, belief that courses were irrelevant and, therefore, students were bored and unmotivated; and finally, frustration born of poor academic performance resulting in failure, grade retention and poor self-concept. Successful prevention/intervention programs must address at least these three issues. The question raised by some authors is: can approaches to reduce dropout rates succeed without a massive restructuring of the education system?
- Some researchers say we are beyond "fix the system" solutions. While there is obvious merit in specific elements included in "piecemeal" intervention/prevention approaches (i.e., approaches that "tinker" with parts of the system and address only one or a few of the problems resulting in dropping out) most researchers contend that factors contributing to dropout rates are long-term, complex and numerous. This leads to recommendations that interventions should incorporate all potentially successful approaches into a comprehensive approach which may result in wholesale restructuring of the educational system.

6 Dropouts and Special Education

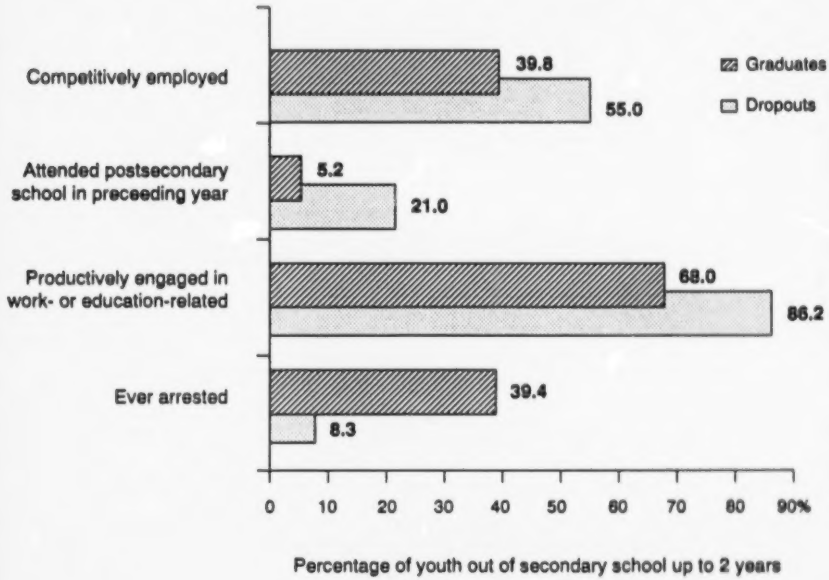
The struggle to obtain equal educational opportunities for students with special needs began at the elementary level with efforts aimed at integrating them into the educational mainstream. The movement of these students into secondary schools is a relatively recent development and this may account, in part, for the dearth of research that deals specifically with dropping out an special education. Implications for special education and the dropout issue are explored below.

- Estimates for students with special needs falling under the special education umbrella are 10 to 15% of the total school population.
- The findings of a longitudinal transition study of students with special needs who moved through secondary school is underway in the U.S. Dropout rates as documented in this study are shown on page 16 (Wagner, 1991).
- It is not surprising that almost 50% of students identified as emotionally disturbed leave school before graduating. It is possible that many of their students are capable of meeting present graduation requirements.
- According to this study, dropout rates in the categories of learning disabilities, speech impaired, mentally retarded and other health-impaired correspond roughly to rates in the general population.
- Hahn(1987), however contends that many dropouts are students with undiagnosed learning disabilities and behavior problems.
- Following a population of students with mild handicaps beyond high school, Lichtenstein (1989) was found that dropping out was a greater factor in unemployment than living with a handicap.



Dropout Rates of Secondary School Leavers, by Disability Category

- There is virtually no information in dropout literature that deals with consequences for students with severe/profound handicaps. Some of these students stay in school simply because there are no alternatives.
- Although specific data are not available, it is believed that the vast majority of students with special needs do not graduate. They tend to be in nondegree programs leading to attendance certificates or certificates of completion. Lichtenstein (1989).
- Another feature of the longitudinal transition study in the U.S. concerns outcomes for students with special needs after they graduate or drop out. These findings are illustrated on page 17 (Wagner, 1991).



Postschool Outcomes of Graduates and Dropouts with Disabilities

- As in the general population, dropping out of school has similar and serious consequences for students with special needs signalling the importance of prevention remedies.
- It is particularly noteworthy that "special education" dropouts are arrested at more than four times the rate of graduates.
- If many dropouts are students with undiagnosed learning disabilities and behavior disorders, one could make a case that all students failing to meet graduation requirements are students with special needs. If so, what is the responsibility of special education to these students and what advantages/disadvantages would accrue to them if they came under a special education umbrella?
- Expanding the mandate of Special Education to include all at-risk students has implications for the role and responsibilities of special educators and for the preparation of teachers. For example, consultation time directed toward regular teachers and parents may increase.

- The "special" in special education may not be appropriate if Special Education includes responsibilities for all at-risk students.
- The challenge for special educators of serving all students at risk of dropping out is that they may be called upon to deal with problems of school attendance, student evaluation and performance of all students.
- Possible benefits of special education for students at risk of dropping out are:

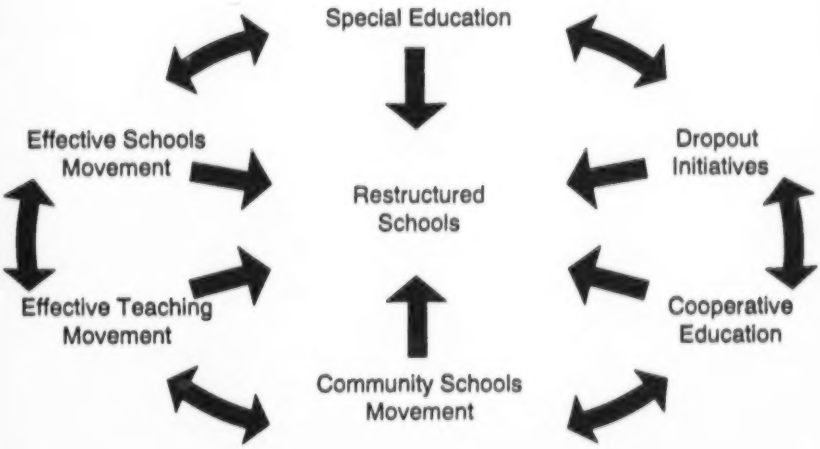
  —Special Educators understand legal obligation on the part of education to provide relevant education services to its clients. Do students at risk of dropping out have similar legal rights?

  —Well organized advocacy and lobbying groups with experience in promoting the rights and needs of students with special needs have been developed in special Education. Would affiliation with special education strengthen system commitments to respond to students at risk?

  —In Special Education, numerous specific curriculum and teaching strategies have been developed to assist students with learning and behavioural problems. Would students at risk benefit from these strategies?
- Examples of Special Education procedures that may benefit students at risk of dropping out are: development of individual education plans, involvement of parents, team approaches, use of technology to compensate for specific learning problems, student evaluation practices, multi-sensory approaches to learning, etc.
- Special education and dropout initiatives embrace some common themes (e.g., a trend away from special, segregated or alternate programs and educational services that respond to individual needs). Would synthesis of special education and dropout initiatives accelerate committment to restructuring the educational system?
- Similar to trial and error practice in Special Education, dropout prevention/intervention programs have a track record of attempting various special or alternative programs. Research in both fields indicates that the success of alternative programs are limited. This suggests that approaches must avoid partial or piecemeal solutions, keep students and preventions/interventions in the educational mainstream and lends weight to arguments for large scale, basic restructuring of the educational system.

- From yet a broader perspective, it is worth noting that special education and dropout initiatives share common ground with a number of other recent movements in education that promote reform and restructuring. Perhaps a synthesis of these movements could provide the momentum that is needed to bring about desired change. A framework for synthesis that identifies several of these movements is show below.

A Synthesis of Movements to Restructure Schools



- A coming together or synthesis of movements identified below has potential for bringing powerful pressure on school systems to respond to the rights and needs of all students with special needs.
- Abundant evidence suggests changes in education which would result from such a synthesis would benefit *all* students. Special educators have long believed that the majority of recommendations and procedures coming out of special education represent sound basic educational practices that would be of value to all students.

SELECTED ANNOTATED REFERENCES

Cairnes, R. Cairnes, B., and Neckerman, H. (1989). *Early school* dropout: configuration and determinants. *Child Development, 60,* 1437-1452.

This is a longitudinal study that investigated the behavioral, cognitive, demographic, ethnic and gender factors associated with school dropout.

Desnoyers, J., & Pauker, J. (1988). *School attendance and non-attendance in Canada and the United States* (Contract No. 0640 ONO 3640). Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

This report summarizes information about methods and programs to increase school attendance and decrease absenteeism and the dropout rate in 63 jurisdictions in Canada and the United States. Job specifications for educational personnel, and a variety of model alternative programs are described, and nineteen recommendations are made. The report synthesizes information from diverse sources and explains the methods that North American schools are using to promote attendance and provide support to students who are at risk for dropping out.

Glickman, C. (1990, May). Pretending not to know what we know. *Educational Leadership,* pp. 4-10.

This is a concise and clearly written article on school reform. It reviews the current "state of the art" research about teaching and learning, critically examines commonly held educational assumptions, and provides a blueprint for an improved and more responsive system of education for all students.

Hahn, A. (1987, December). Reaching out to America's dropouts: What to do? *Phi Delta Kappan,* pp 256-263.

This article draws together research on dropouts in the United States and examines it from a national perspective. It opens with an overview of the demographics and economics of the dropout phenomenon and then explores dropping out from the perspectives of students and social scientists. School reforms and alternative school programs which offer the potential to prevent students from dropping out are described. The article concludes with recommendations about the methods which might be used to encourage students to remain in school or return to school if they have dropped out.

Hoffman, L. (1990). *Issues in developing comparable national dropout statistics through the common core of data survey.* (Report No. TM 051 204) Boston: American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 320 941)

This article explores the methodological problems and issues that surround the dropout problem. The author describes the problems that arise from lack of standardized definitions and reporting procedures in the field and provides an instrument that resembles a flowchart to classify dropouts for the purpose of conducting research.

Karp, E. (1988). The dropout phenomenon in Ontario secondary schools. (Contract 1086 ONO4526). Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

This report focuses on various aspects of the dropout issue and although it focuses on dropouts in Ontario, it contains much useful information for interested parties from regions as well.

King, A., Warren, W., Michalski, & Peart, M. (1988).*Improving student retention in Ontario secondary schools* (Contract No. 1087 ONO 4625). Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

This study examines programs and policies designed to improve secondary school retention rates. Based on research involving approximately 5,000 students in 13 Ontario secondary schools, the study addresses questions such as "Who are the dropouts?" "Why do students leave school early?" and ""What conditions would help to keep dropouts in school?" The study also explores the relationship between the part-time employment of students and dropout rates. Methods for evaluating student progress and exemplary programming for basic and general secondary school students are described, and the issue of streaming vs. nonstreaming is discussed. The authors provide extensive data about dropouts and dropout-prevention programs in Ontario, and much of their information appears to be representative for other Canadian provinces as well.

Lawton, S., Leithwood, K., Batcher, E., Donaldson, E., & Steward, T. (1988). *Student retention and transition in Ontario high schools: Policies, practices, and prospects* (Contract No. 1098 ONO 4611). Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

This detailed and comprehensive study uses four approaches (social ecology, organizational analysis, ethnography, and an exploration of the school-to-work transition) to examine how high schools in Ontario might increase student retention. the study addresses questions about policy, effective schools, identifiable themes in the process of dropping out, and the transition from school to employment. The authors conclude with carefully crafted analysis of the dropout problem and its potential solutions.

Levin, B. (1990, October). Dropouts. *The Canadian School Executive*, pp. 15-17.

This article is both thoughtful and thought provoking, but perhaps its greatest merit is that it contains an unusual recommendation for reducing the dropout rate in Canadian schools. It begins with a summary of current findings about students who drop out and the consequences of leaving school. In its analysis of these findings the article notes that there is little evidence to support the efficacy of current dropout programs. As opposed to the variety of present approaches for preventing school dropouts, the author contends that extensive and fundamental changes to the entire Canadian educational system are needed if the dropout rate is to be reduced. Instead of recommending more programs that focus on changing student variables to reduce the dropout rate, the article takes the position that it is schools themselves that must change. The solution to the dropout problem, the author asserts, is to restructure schools and make them more effective (i.e., attractive) for all students rather than concentrating on programs that serve only a small number of students.

Lichtenstein, S. (1989). Post-school employment patterns of handicapped and nonhandicapped graduates and dropouts. *International Journal of Educational Research, 15*(5), 501-513.

This study investigates the employment patterns of self-identified handicapped and nonhandicapped graduates and dropouts and confirms and extends previous research in this area. The author finds that (1) dropouts, regardless of whether they are handicapped or not, are more likely to be unemployed than high school graduates, and (2)

students with mild disabilities (i.e., learning disabilities or hearing, speech, or health impairments) are more likely to drop out of school than their nonhandicapped peers. The limitations of the study and the implications of its results are extensively discussed, and recommendations for services for students with mild disabilities are made. This study is valuable because relatively little research has been conducted with the aim of describing the relationship between specific disabilities and the dropout rate.

Mackay, R., & Myles, L. (1989).*Native student dropouts in Ontario schools.* Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

This is an extensive analysis of Native dropouts in Ontario schools. Using structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews with Native dropouts, their parents, and educators, this study investigates the factors which contribute to Natives dropping out of school. Some of the factors which are identified are: English language skills, academic achievement, student-staff relationships, parental support, home-school relationships, peer relationships, curriculum, attendance, financial problems, etc. The study contains 44 recommendations for making Ontario schools more responsive to the needs of Native students and provides much valuable background information about the problems which cause Native students to drop out of school. The results of this research appear to have great generalizability beyond Ontario. For this reason the study will be of interest to educators and policy makers concerned with the education of native students in provinces throughout Canada.

Markey, J. (1988). The labor problems of today's high school dropouts. *Monthly Labor Review, 111*(6), 36-43.

This article focuses on the financial implications of dropping out of school for individuals and for the economy of the United States. It provides detailed information about the number of dropouts from 1967-1988, summarizes the factors contributing to the dropout rate from an economic perspective, and traces the jobless rate for male and female dropouts and members of ethnic minority groups. The article is remarkable for the way it uses economic data to paint a grim picture of the present and future employment prospects for students who drop out of school. Although this article was based on information compiled from an American database, the reader is left with the strong impression that if a similar article were written from a Canadian viewpoint the financial situation it would describe for our nation's dropouts would be just as bleak.

Natriello, G. Pallas, A. and Alexander, K. (1989). On the right track?: curriculum and academic achievement. *Sociology of Education, 62,* 109-118.

This article examines the consequences of dropping out versus remaining in school.

Ryan, J. (1989). Disciplining the Innut: Normalization, characterization, and schooling. *Curriculum Inquiry, 19*(4), 379-403.

This article explores the practices of traditional schooling and their effects on Native students from the Innut community. The author contends that the Euro-Canadian orientation and practices of Canadian schools alienate Native students and cause them to drop out of school. Among the practices identified in this regard are continuous observation, evaluation, documentation, punishment, and reward, which are seen as being used to "normalize" the Innut and ensure that they conform to non-Innut standards. The article's principle usefulness lies in its analysis of the discrepancy between the pervasive practices of Canadian schools and the culture of Innut students. It also has value for its explanation of how this lack of "fit" between the schools and the population they serve affects Innut students.

Sullivan, M. (1988). *A comparative analysis of drop-outs and non drop-outs in Ontario secondary schools* (Contract No. 1094 ONO 4527). Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

This research report describes differences between dropouts and graduates in Ontario. Based on interviews conducted with approximately 1400 residents who attended secondary school, the study explores the family and demographic backgrounds, employment situations, attitudes towards education, types of schools, and courses taken for dropouts and graduates. In addition, a final section of the study investigates the situation and attitudes of dropouts. Among other results, it was found that most dropouts were dissatisfied with their education because: (1) They believed that their teachers had negative attitudes towards them and their jobs, (2) they thought that the type and range of the courses that were available were unsatisfactory, and (3) they felt that the quality of instruction offered to them was poor. In addition, the study showed that a desire to begin working was the most often cited reason dropouts gave for leaving school.

Although the results of the research are extensively and clearly described, the most interesting feature of this report is its discussion of

its findings. One conclusion is that at least some dropping out may be prevented and that many students drop out to "escape" from school. Making courses more attractive and interesting to students is seen as a starting point in reducing the dropout rate. The degree to which dropouts are bored with and alienated from school is also seen as suggesting the fundamental reforms to the educational system are needed if the dropout rate is to be reduced.

Wagner, Mary (1991, April). *School completion of students with disabilities: what do we know? what can we know?.* Paper presented at The Annual Leadership Conference for State Directors of Special Education.

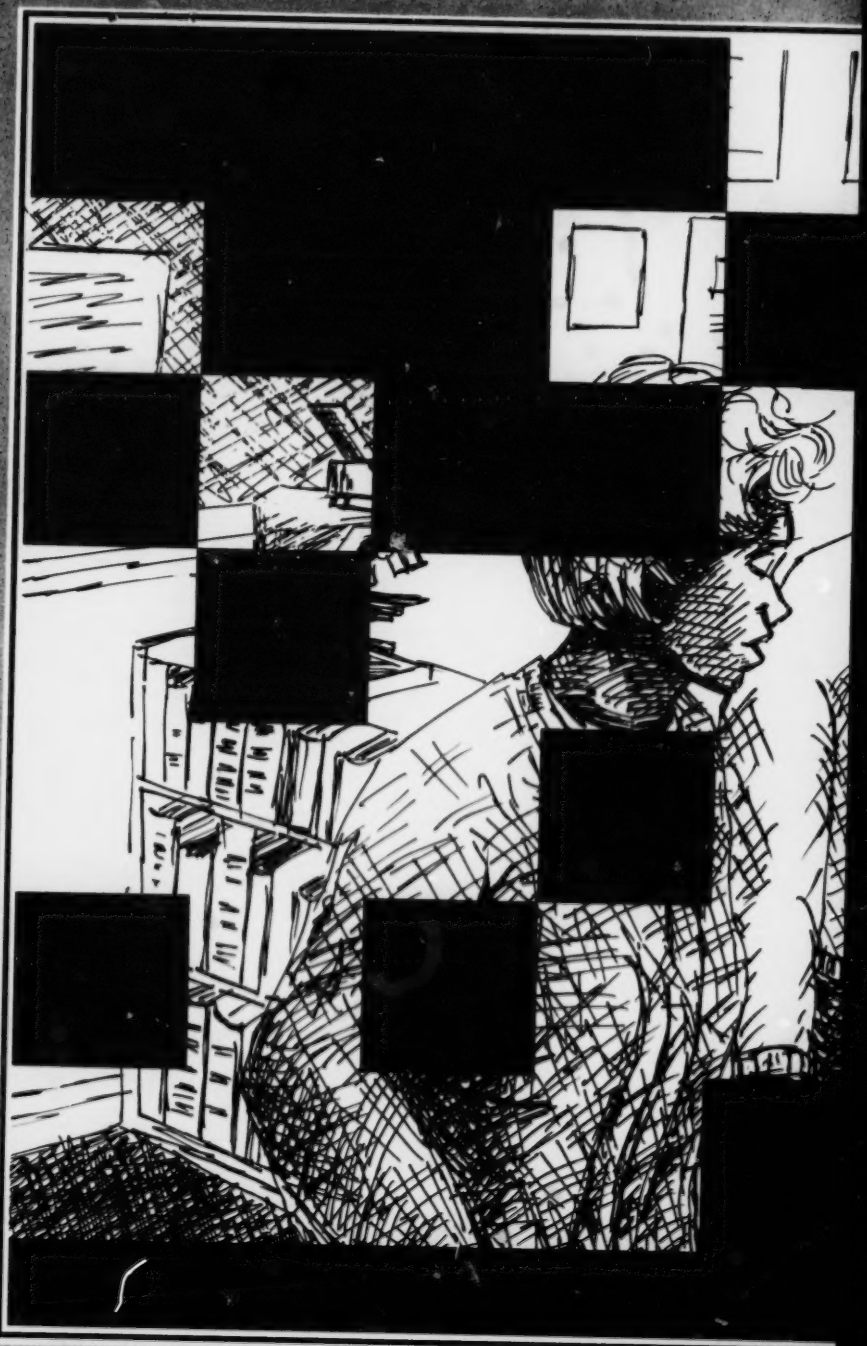
This paper represents the substance of a presentation to the Annual Leardership Conference of State Directors of Special Education concerning the findings from a national longitudinal transition study of special education students. The study was directed toward identifying the characteristics of youth with disabilities and their experiences in adolescence and early adulthood.

Wideen, M., Pye, I., Naylor, C., & Crofton, F. (1990). *A platform for change: A study of Surrey secondary schools.* Burnaby, B.C.: Simon Fraser University.

This report, compiled by teachers and university-based academics, summarizes research from the United States and Canada and uses it as a backdrop to describe the dropout phenomenon in British Columbia's second-largest school district. Extensive information about the economics of dropping out of school is presented, as well as the results of individual and group interviews with dropouts. Among its other recommendations, the report suggests that (1) the voices of dropouts themselves should be heard in the ongoing dialogue among educators about reducing the dropout rate, and (2) rather than promoting separate, alternative programs for students at risk for dropping out, mainstream educators should improve their instructional methods and make their courses more attractive.

Wittenberg, S. (1988). Youth-At-Risk: *Who are they, why are they leaving, and what can we do?* (Report No. PS 016 598). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 301 317).

This article summarizes the literature on the characteristics of youth-at-risk, examines the factors which are reported to cause at-risk students to drop out, and describes methods for retaining at-risk students in school. It concludes with a discussion of ten characteristics of successful dropout intervention programs. These are as follows: Systematic identification of at-risk youth, appropriate program organization, proper staff selection, a team approach, a specific focus on educational processes, careful selection of candidates for the program, a respected institutional role, administrator flexibility, community involvement in the program, and substance abuse awareness.



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